Comparative Legislative Research Center

THE KOREAN LEGISLATIVE PROCESS:
AN OVERVIEW

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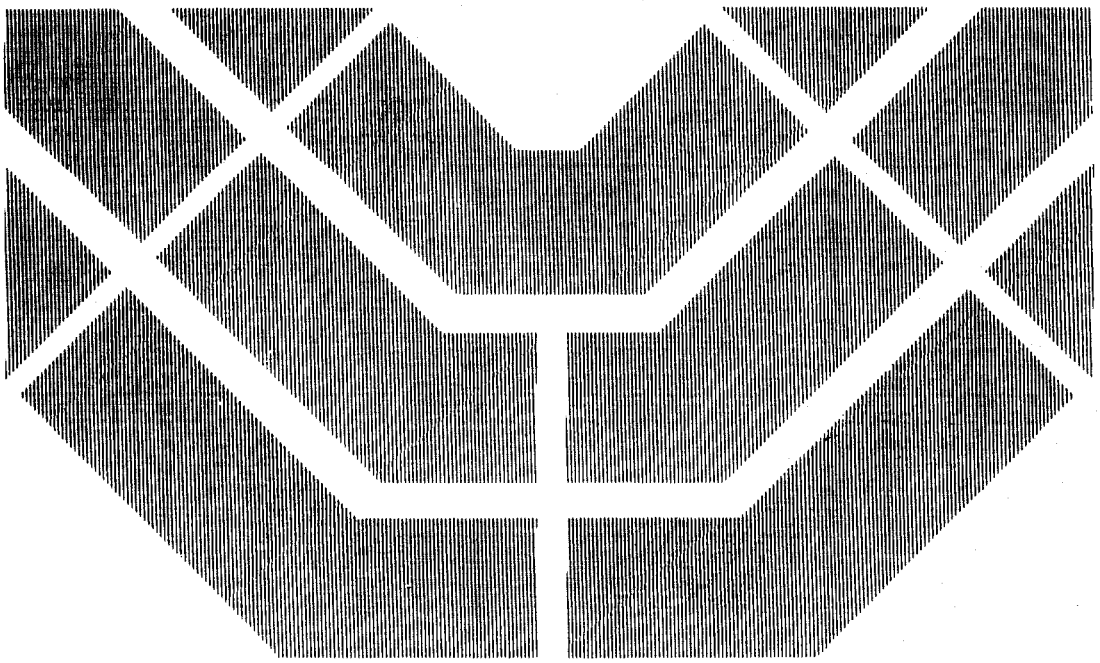

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The Kukhoe or the National Assembly is the legislative branch of the government, prescribed by the Constitution to represent the will of the people. In this overview we will stress the importance of the cultural environment in which the legislature functions. Also, we will try to highlight the salient features of the National Assembly in terms of its organizational structure and its dynamic processes. The chapter comprises four main topics: (1) the significance of the legislature in democracy, (2) the nature of the Korean political culture, (3) the formal organizational structure, and finally, (4) the characteristics of the legislative process.

LEGISLATURE AND POLITICAL DEMOCRACY

The institution of popular representation, known variously in different nations as parliament, congress, diet, or national assembly, has developed in close association with the rise of modern democracies. Indeed, the meshing of the two has historically been so close that one cannot think today of a functioning democracy without assuming a strong and effective legislature. A strong and active representative assembly, one can therefore assert, is the requisite of a democratic government. As a popularly elected body this institution performs the linkage functions most vital to the operation of democratic politics. Aspects of the linkage functions that are centrally important are: representation, leadership responsiveness and accountability, political communication, leadership

selection, and citizen political participation.

The first and foremost linkage function commonly attributed to the legislature is representation. The concept of representation is complex and resists an easy definition. Hannah Pitkin has defined it as the state of affairs in which "the people of a nation are present in the action of its government."[1] Although the legislature is not the only institution that makes the people's presence felt in the government's actions, there is no question that it is the principal structure that links the will of the people to the nerve centers of government. The diverse interests and opinions of broad segments of the population find their political expressions through the representative assembly. Representation is, needless to say, the heart of a parliamentary democracy.

Among all groups of political leadership, legislators are probably most vulnerable to citizens' control. This is not only because they are popularly elected but also because their continued tenure in office depends on a periodic approval by their constitutents. No other leadership groups have such incentives to be responsive to the public as have the legislators. Cabinet members, high ranking civil servants, military leaders, judges, and managers of public corporations are relatively immune to the public's demands for responsiveness. This is not to say that legislators are always more responsive in their actions than other groups, but rather that they operate in an institutional environment in which there are built-in incentives for being responsive. The extent to which citizens actually exercise control over their representatives depends on many conditions other than the mere existence of a legislative body: a relatively free and open election, a genuine competitive party system

that produces a meaningful choice of candidates and policies, and most importantly, a politically sophisticated electorate who scrutinizes the performance of their legislators.

Political communication is vital to the efficient operation of any political system. In a democracy it is even more vital. The legislature as a linkage institution plays a major role in communication. Legislators transmit the major concerns of their constituents to the government. Also, they inform the people of the intents of government policies. They act, therefore, as a transmission belt of both upward and downward political communication. Moreover, the legislative arena serves as an important public forum where the pressing issues of the day are openly debated. Public hearings and investigations organized by legislative committees help focus public opinions on the issues that would otherwise remain dormant. In authoritarian regimes the communication role of the legislature becomes even more significant, not so much because it is a strong and active body but because no viable alternative channels of communication are readily available. Mass media and political parties, the two potentially important communications channels, tend to be ineffectual. With but a few exceptions, the mass media are tightly controlled by these regimes and are permitted to function as no more than an official mouthpiece. Seldom do the opinions and sentiments of the people find their free expressions in the media. Likewise, political parties are weak, lacking in mass organizations and mass followings. Most of these parties are in effect parliamentary parties in character with little or no effective penetration into the ranks of citizens. Thus, one cannot expect of the parties a significant communication role. In the absence of alternative channels, the legislature

emerges as a focal institution on which converge the mounting pressures of upward communication from the people to their government.

The legislature links the people with their government by creating a regular opportunity in which they can choose their own representatives. The popular selection of leadership is an important feature of democracy and the legislature plays a major role in it. Moreover, the legislative members whom the people choose constitute a principal recruitment pool from which the highest executive leaders are often selected. Thus, not only do the people have a direct role in selecting their legislative members but also an indirect role in the selection of the highest political leaders of the the nation through the operation of an effective legislature.

The legislative institutions help create participatory opportunities, both formal and informal, that would not otherwise be possible. It affords the people a formal and regular opportunity to exercise their voting rights. But more important than this formal opportunity are the informal opportunities of citizen participation created by the legislature. The acts of lobbying a legislative member, campaigning for a candidate, demanding constituency services, and taking an active membership in a political organization are some examples of such participation. These forms of participation, which usually require a greater degree of commitment and political sophistication than does the relatively simple act of voting, are therefore stronger and more effective participatory behaviors. A strong and active legislature produces a political milieu in which such forms of citizen participation are encouraged.

The intimate connection between an effective legislature and political

democracy is self-evident as discussed above. The architects of the 1948 Korean Constitution manifested their democratic aspiration by making the legislative branch a central and powerful body. The scope of its powers was extremely broad and encompassing. In addition to the usual power of legislation, the National Assembly (Kukhoe) had the powers to conduct investigations, interpellations, and public hearings; the power to institute impeachment hearings against any public officials including the President; the power for advice and consent on matters of appointment to key government posts and the conduct of foreign policy; and most importantly, the power to elect the Executive head of the nation. In spite of all these powers that would have made the National Assembly the single most important governmental body, later developments proved to be to the contrary. The National Assembly became subsequently a weak institution, dominated and manipulated by ambitious Presidents. Contrary to the intent of the Constitution, it became subservient to the Executive, with its status deteriorating to the point of being a mere rubber-stamp organization. The question is then: Why did it occur that way? It is too easy to seek an answer in the emergence of a strong Executive. In the postwar period the Executive has always dominated Korean politics, possibly with the exception of a brief period of the Chang Myŏn regime. But to attribute the impotence of the Kukhoe to the dominant Executive does not really provide an answer because a strong executive and a weak legislature are two different sides of the same phenomenon. Therefore, one must go beyond the mere suggestion of executive supremacy in order to explain a weak legislature. The question is then: What is there in the Korean society that has caused the phenomenon of executive dominance? The identification of social and cultural forces

that tend to concentrate the power in the executive becomes crucial in our inquiry.

The actual operation of any political institution is the result of a complex interplay of an institution's formal structure and the political culture that surrounds it. It is our contention that the National Assembly, despite all its formal powers prescribed in the Constitution, has failed to become a strong body because there are certain elements in the Korean political culture that are adverse to the development of a parliamentary democracy. Until these adverse cultural elements are removed, the possibility of instituting a strong representative assembly is slim, indeed. We will, thus, begin this overview with a general characterization of the Korean political culture. This will help us to understand not only the subservient role that the National Assembly has come to play in Korean politics, or in the popular parlance Kukhoe sinyŏhwa (becoming a maid-servant of the executive), but also the particular ways in which the legislative affairs are conducted.[2]

SALIENT FEATURES OF THE POLITICAL CULTURE

The political culture may be defined as the patterns of politically relevant orientations shared widely among members of a society. It comprises two main parts: the elite political culture and the mass political culture. Also, there are several key demensions of the political culture that may serve as the categories of description: the beliefs and attitudes regarding the political system, the regime and its leaders, the legitimacy of the regime's fundamental goals, the political roles of leaders and followers, and the basic norms and procedures governing the political process.

Although the political culture is embedded in individual orientations, it is not identical to the latter. The political culture, whether of the elites or masses, consists of the patterns of political beliefs and attitudes as distributed throughout the society. These patterns of distribution and their isolation are the core of the political culture study.

What are the salient features of the Korean political culture? How do these cultural features interact with the formal political structures and shape the political process in society? We will isolate eight such features characteristic of the Korean political culture.

A Strong Sense of National Identity. One dominant feature of the Korean political culture is its strong sense of national identity. Virtually everyone perceives himself as a Korean, sharply distinguishing himself from the peoples of other nations. In this respect, Koreans are very much like the Japanese but stand in marked contrast to the peoples of many Third World countries where ethnic and cultural pluralism have made it difficult to create a common psychological identity. The homogeneity in history, culture, and race obviously has contributed to the development of a common national idenity. The physical endowments of Korea such as her relatively compact and well defined territory must have been a significant factor, too.

The sense of belonging together, growing out of a common national identity, heightens nationalistic feeling. Among all political ideologies that were brought to Korea in the postwar period, none proved to have greater popular appeal than nationalism. The reason is that the ideology of nationalism and the Korean political culture are compatible. Other

ideologies of democracy and socialism had met a strong resistance, making it difficult to successfully transplant them in their original forms. Invariably, these ideologies have undergone drastic changes, acquiring a heavy nationalistic component. The socialism of North Korea is intensely nationalistic in its content as expressed in the so-called Juch'e ideology of Kim Il-sŏng. The yushin ideology of the South contains as much nationalistic outlook as its northern counterpart. Nationalism inspires and arouses the Korean mass because it strikes a responsive chord in their sense of national identity.

The strong sense of a common national identity implies a high degree of consensus on the legitimacy of the Korean national community. No one can seriously challenge the validity and legitimacy of a Korean nation. The people are intensely loyal to the nation and share a strong psychological tie to it. In this respect Korea must be regarded as having passed well beyond the traumatic stage of nation-building, a process in which many Third World countries are currently embroiled. Inherent in the Korean national consciousness also are potential tendencies of xenophobia and chauvinism. Because Koreans endeavor to distinguish themselves sharply from the peoples of other nations, it offers a fertile ground for the occasional upsurge of an intensely egocentric nationalism, totally blind to the world outside. Excessive emphasis on everything "Korean," various attempts to mythicize her history and tradition in order to heighten the sense of national consciousness, and the seemingly anachronistic revival of the old Confucian values that had served well the simple agrarian society of the past but are clearly inappropriate in an industrialized society of today, are some of the recent manifestations of an egocentric nationalism.

In their search for an ideology that can justify the regime, the yushin leaders chose to stress the egocentric aspects of nationalism because they felt that the public would respond enthusiastically to such symbols. However, it must also be noted that the yushin leaders did not espouse a narrow nationalism in their economic policies. In part, it was because of their commitment to a growth policy which requires for its success continuous inflows of foreign capital and technology. There appear to be inherently conflicting elements in the yushin nationalism. On the one hand, it stressed the exclusivity of the Korean political and cultural characters, and on the other, the paramount goal of a rapid economic growth through industrialization and international trade. The latter goal could not be achieved in an ideological framework of a narrow egocentric nationalism but instead, required a more pragmatic internationalism. The yushin leaders did not see any inconsistency in their nationalism because they thought a growing economy would strengthen their political goals. However, the inward postures of egocentric nationalism produced an obsession with glorification of the past, the preservation of "old" ways, and at times, an anachronoistic self-delusion, all of which discourage progressive social and political changes. The economic pragmatism motivated by the growth strategy unleashed the very opposite forces, generating increased demands for advanced foreign technologies, urban styles of life associated with industrialized western nations, progressive social and political changes. Thus, the yushin nationalism was structurally inconsistent.

Nationalism could undergo a fundamental change in character in a divided nation. Because of its special emotional appeals to the people, the leaders of the regimes in both halves of Korea saw it convenient to

construct a nationalistic ideology. In the course of time nationalism, initially a sense of identification with a single political entity, became closely entwined with the regime ideology, instead. As each regime gained strength in its legitimacy, so did its nationalistic ideology. Consequently, nationalism which began as a sense of a single national identity may cease to be what it was. There is a real possibility that if the condition of division continues indefinitely, the Korean nationalism would no longer be a common identity about one political community.

Truncated Belief System. The Korean political culture contains many inconsistencies. In part, this is inevitable in a society where rapid social changes are taking place. Urbanization, industrialization, and transportation and communications development entail basic changes in the social relations and concomitantly, changes in social and political values. Some old values are discarded and new ones are adopted in this change process. The inconsistencies appear not because the old values are replaced by the new ones but rather because of the ways in which the replacement occurs. The new beliefs and values are often added to, but not integrated into, the existing ones resulting in a compartmentalized political culture.

The inconsistencies may be best illustrated by some specific examples. Members of the National Assembly, unquestionably one of the most politically sophisticated groups, perceive popular representation as their main responsibility. They feel strongly committed to the goal of representing the interests and opinions of their constituencies. However, they also exhibit an astonishing lack of any clear conception of whom they should be representing. They often mention that they strive to represent the interests of the people, a highly vague entity at best. If they do not have a

specific group of people whose interests and sentiments they wish to represent, then what is the significance of their strong comitment to the principle of popular representation? It is obvious that the National Assemblymen hold an inconsistent conception of their job. They are often unaware of such inconsistency, sincere in their belief that they are truly working for representation.

The inconsistent beliefs are even more conspicuous among the public. The widespread and ardent public aspiration for a democratic form of government is beyond any doubt in Korea today. A recent study of some 2,000 adult citizens shows that a preponderant majority of 80 percent expressed their clear preference for a democratic form of government, organized along the line of Western democracies.[3] While they show such strong feelings about democracy, they also embrace at the same time many anti-democratic attitudes. If they take their democratic aspiration seriously, they must also develop a set of beliefs and attitudes consonant with its realization. On the contrary, various studies show that the Koreans tend to be politically apathetic, non-participatory, and highly submissive to authorities. Also, they tend to show a low sense of political efficacy, denying themselves an active rôle in the political process. All of these attributes are in sharp contrast to their democratic aspirations. Thus, the mass political belief system is truncated, probably to a greater extent than among the nation's elites.

The consituent elements of the Korean political culture are not well integrated so as to give it a coherent structure. Clusters of beliefs and values, often contradictory to each other, exist side by side forming a truncated belief system. These inconsistencies may account for much of

the vacillating political behaviors so typical of Korean politics. Although there are bound to be some inconsistencies in any political culture, what makes the case of Korea unique is the extent to which her culture is truncated.

Authoritarianism. Scholars have observed almost unanimously a pronounced authoritarian tendency in the Korean political culture. The four faces of authoritarianism as manifested in the political process deserve some further comment. The first is the nearly blind submission that the people offer to political authorities. Because of the influence of the Confucian prescription of a proper social order based upon rigid hierarchy and status, Koreans have learned from their young ages to defer to their social superiors. These submissive attitudes and beliefs apply with an equal force to all political relations. The people tend to show an indiscriminate deference to their political leaders. Submissive attitudes such as these also reduce their ability to extend or withhold their support for a leader when his performance proves to be inadequate.

Another face of authoritarianism is widespread political apathy. By definition, a submissive attitude discourages an active citizenship role in politics. Many people, especially among those who have deeply ingrained deferential attitudes, feel that politics and governmental affairs are something beyond their comprehension and that it is inappropriate for them to play an assertive role. They also believe that it is better to leave the political problems to their leaders or to government officials to solve. The result of all this is public apathy and indifference. Authoritarianism makes political apathy socially acceptable. Apathy is also caused by an intense feeling of political disenchantment. Feelings

of disenchantment were particularly strong among well-educated urban middle class members, intellectuals, and students. They were deeply disaffected and disillusioned by an unresponsive regime and developed a cynical attitude toward political participation. Because they realized that their participation had absolutely no impact on governmental actions, they made a conscious decision to withdraw from the political arena.

The third face of authoritarianism is revealed in the attitudes among leaders. In their relations with citizens the leaders tend to exhibit arrogance as well as a distorted sense of self-righteousness. Their estimate of the citizens' political capacity tends to be low, although they would not openly say it. Consequently, they show little respect for those whom they govern, believing that the people, if not stupid, are ignorant. Moreover, they have no strong conception that their status and power are ultimately derived from the people. Typical of such an attitude is one expressed in the well-known popular adage, the kwanjon minbi, or "the officials revered and the people despised." The government officials do not take the concept of public service seriously, nor do they usually feel accountable to the people whom they are presumed to serve. The elitism described above is deeply rooted in the Korean political culture and plays a significant role in shaping her bureaucratic politics today.

Personalism is the fourth face of authoritarianism. In the postwar period there has been a definite tendency, in both South and North Korea, for political power to gravitate to a single leader. By personalism, we refer to this tendency of power concentration in a person instead of in the institutions. In South Korea, the executive leaders have always wielded supreme power, often in clear contradiction to the formal constitutional

stipulations. If one were to determine the distribution of power in Korean society, it would be wise for him to identify the supreme leader and those who have the privileges of seeing him personally. One most reliable index of actual power is how frequently and how long a private audience an individual can obtain from the supreme leader, not the formal rank of his official position. To put the matter more bluntly, the prime minister and his cabinet members or the Supreme Court justices have much less influence than the head of the President's body guards, his personal staffs, the heads of intelligence orgainzations, all of whom have daily contacts with the supreme leader. Physical access to the supreme power holder is the single most important source of power.

Personalized power is likely to occur in the cultural environment where the people are habitually deferential to their leaders. Among Koreans there is a tendency to attribute power and authority to individual leaders and not to the institutions in which these leaders serve. They seem to feel more at home with the idea of personalized authority than with the idea of institutionalized power. Because of personalism, a "command" style of politics comes to prevail. Replete in the political language are phrases like "His Excellency's directive," "the instruction from above," and "the orders from the Blue House (the President's official residence)," all carrying more force than any other formal government policy announcement. The command style of politics is pervasive throughout the society, discouraging any upward flow of communication from below. The government bureaucracy with its excessive centralization is a prime example; much of its operation is devoted to the downward flows of administrative directives and seldom the reverse. We spoke only of personalism centered around the supreme leader,

but in fact, similar phenomena can be observed elsewhere. In business corporations, political parties, military organizations, and other factional groupings exist the same strong personality orientations. That power tends to be associated with specific individuals, and not with the institutions in which they serve, is one marked feature of the Korean political culture.

Formalism. There is a tendency in the Korean culture to emphasize formal, rather than substantive, aspects of social behaviors. The propriety of a behavior is stressed and judged by whether or not it possesses a "myŏngbun." The myŏngbun is a complex and often ambiguous cultural concept, meaning roughly a legitimate basis of social action. For an action to be regarded as legitimate it must be congruent with some general and abstract ethical principles. An obsessive concern with the myŏngbun leads to an excessive preoccupation with the rationalization of one's action, instead of a serious discussion of the substance of an action including its concrete consequences. Forms and styles of behaviors are considered important, and the merits of an action are often judged on this basis, not on the basis of the substantive program of an action.

Political expressions of formalism are quite diverse. In political debates it takes the form of an unbridgeable conflict between principles. The contestants in a debate tend to draw their battle line along a set of abstract ethical or political principles. While they concentrate on the relative merits of such principles underlying their positions, they often ignore the substantive merits of their proposed actions. Consequently, political debates become debates over opposing principles which are, by their very nature, difficult to resolve. One

result of this is the frequent political stalemates and immobilisme in Korean politics. Nowhere is this tendency more sharply revealed than in the preceedings of the National Assembly. There were numerous occasions in which the partisan conflicts reached such a point that no normal dialogues between the government and opposition members were possible. At times the government party members ran the Assembly alone, boycotted totally by the opposition members. At other times, the opposition members obstructed the scheduled meetings by blockading the Assembly building to keep the government members out or by occupying the rostrum to obstruct a meeting. If all of these failed, the opposition resorted to extra-constitutional methods by calling for a mass demonstration of their sympathizers. Both civility and collegiality, the two requisites of normal legislative process, were absent too often in the Korean National Assembly. The inflexible styles of confrontation among politicians can be accounted for by their rigid adherence to abstract principles. And such attitudes have also discouraged the formation of a pragmatic bargaining culture in the legislature as well as in other political arenas.

Formalism is also manifest in the excessive attention and care given to the legal aspects of political issues. For example, the constitutional issues always attract an enormous amount of public attention, not so much because they affect the fundamental structures of the polity but because they involve debates over formal principles. The nation's constitution has undergone several amendments since 1948, each time arousing intense popular excitement. However, once a new constitution was adopted, the people tended to ignore it and proceeded as if

nothing had changed. The substantive aspects of application receive relatively little attention while the construction of a formal constitutional structure or other governmental agencies consumes all the energy there is. If constitutionalism had failed in Korea, it was not so much because of any serious faults contained in the written documents but rather because they were egregiously abused or ignored in applications. The same is true with many government policy programs, too. There is a tendency among politicains and government officials to expend a great deal of attention and energy until a policy is formulated. Once the policy is promulgated, usually with a great deal of fanfare, it is likely to become quietly forgotten. The implementation of a program seldom attracts serious attention from the policy-makers themselves or from the public. The formal constitutional structures and other policy programs, almost always the result of painstakingly extended deliberations, often end up being nothing more than plans on paper.

Formalism discourages serious public debates on the substantive issues. It tends to direct political attention away from the issues and away from the solutions of problems that have direct bearings on daily lives of citizens. One consequence of formalism is, therefore, an endless and sterile political debate which does not produce the real results. Another consequence is the interminable succession of new policy programs even before the old programs are fully implemented.

Small Group Collectivism. The traditional Korean culture was hostile to individualism. Individuals were always identified as part of groups such as families, clans, or village communities. Collectivism rather than individualism defined the identity of an individual. This collective

orientation still persists in Korea. In the wake of massive population movements caused by the division in 1945, the Korean War of 1950-53, and rapid urbanization in the 1960s, collectivism had weakened considerably. But in the 1970s we witnessed a reversal of this trend through the resurgence of an intense small group consciousness. It was caused by a series of regime policies to reestablish the cultural and social identity among Koreans. Part of the regime effort was directed to the rediscovery of the past and traditions, thereby encouraging the glorification and even some distortion of historical facts. All of these were done to serve and strengthen the regime ideology, i.e., its egocentric nationalism. Prominent rediscoveries included: the spirit of communal cooperation, familism based on the Confucian precept of filial piety, a sense of regional pride and identity, and the idea of an absolute loyalty to the ruler. All of these were important parts of the cultural foundations upon which the old dynastic rules were once built. The revival of these traditional values resulted in the resurgence of particularism, one component of which is the small group consciousness.

In Korea, small groups are formed on the basis of three types of relationship: family and kinship ties, school ties, and regional connections. Because membership in these groups is defined by particularistic criteria, it is practically closed to any outsiders. Moreover, these groups command an intense feeling of loyalty from their members. Such attachments to small particularistic groups hinder broadly based social cooperation. Precisely because of this small group collectivism, Koreans find it difficult to form cooperative activities transcending the boundaries of their own small immediate groups. To illustrate this point a bit more, let us consider the concept of amoral familism suggested by Edward Banfield.[4] He has

argued that the poverty in southern Italy is the consequence of the lack of social cooperation among members of a community. The lack of cooperation is caused by the deeply ingrained suspicion and distrust that people hold toward other members of the community. In his view, the principal source of this social distrust lies in their intense feelings of loyalty to their families at the exclusion of all others. The social world outside their immediate families is therefore regarded as essentially hostile. Also, it serves as an object to be exploited to the best of one's ability for the sake of the benefits to one's family. Social relations constructed upon this premise are bound to be fluid and amoral. Consequently, much of social behavior is unrestrained by a sense of morality. Amoral familism refers to this exclusive loyalty to one's family.

Although the small group collectivism in Korea is by no means identical to Banfield's amoral familism, there exist certain similarities. In Korea small group orientation encompasses something much more than familism per se; it also includes other types of groups formed on the basis of school ties and birthplaces. They are similar, however, in some respects. The sense of exclusive loyalty to small groups is as intense as the Italian familism. Furthermore, small groups also cause basically the same hostile and distrustful attitudes among Koreans. They tend to behave amorally in social relations, especially when the interests of their own groups are at stake. What we might call the amoral small group collectivism appears to operate in the Korean society.

Amoral small group collectivism affects Korean politics in several major ways. First of all, the people who are preoccupied with the limited interests of their own groups tend to ignore the interests and welfare

of other members of society, a social context which does not encourage the development of a strong sense of public regard. Second, it gives rise to political factionalism. Factionalism has long been a chronic feature of Korean politics. It is almost ubiquitous in all public and private organizations. Factional strife exists within the legislature, political parties, and the government bureaucracy. The factional divisions often follow personal networks built upon family, school, or regional ties. Because of divisive factional strife political parties, especially opposition parties, find it difficult to achieve unity in their political actions. In fact, it is not inaccurate at all to regard Korean parties as loosely organized federations of competing factions, each led by a politician of some stature.

Third, the small group consciousness influences the ways in which citizens participate in politics. Huntington and Nelson have distinguished two types of mass participation: autonomous and mobilized.[5] The autonomous participation refers to the kind of participation that arises from political awareness. Those who are well informed of politics and have a crystallized preference, engage in politics to register their views. These activities are self-assertive in character and thus, should be regarded as autonomous. The mobilized participation refers to the political acts in which some people engage merely in deference to, or in fear of, authorities. This kind of participation does not involve much conscious political choice, but instead is a manifestation of compliant behaviors. In electoral contests the small group networks are extensively utilized by candidates and particularly in rural areas these networks serve as the principal vehicles for vote mobilization. The extensive utilization of small groups

leads to two important consequences. One is the strikingly high level of voting participation. Because virtually every adult citizen is a member of one of these small groups, it is relatively easy to bring out people to polls through mobilization of personal networks, which results in a high voting rate. Another consequence is the mobilized participation. The relatively high voting rate among the rural residents does not necessarily mean that the voters make conscious political choices as do the autonomous participants. Many go to the polls simply because they are told to do so, knowing very little about what the main issues involved or what the relative merits of the candidates are. There is evidence that a sizable part of voting participation in Korea is in fact the result of mobilization.[6] The small group collectivism discourages autonomous political participation, an important requisite of democratic development.

Political Emotionalism. In the Korean culture runs a deep undercurrent of emotionalism. Expressive of such emotionalism are the two Korean words, jŏng and han.[7] Both constitute the most popular themes of novels, poetry, plays, films and popular songs. The word "jŏng" means literally human feelings, very much akin to the Japanese notion of ninjo. It stresses warm, personal, and emotional aspects of social relations. In this sense it stands in opposition to more rational and critical orientations. The meaning of "han" is so subtle and complex that it is beyond our capacity here to render an accurate translation. We must leave this difficult task to others who have greater literary imaginations. Suffice it to say here, however, that the word means something of a pathos or a bitter regret. The central point is that emotional aspects of social life receive considerable emphasis in the Korean culture. Because of their emotional inclinations

Koreans are easily aroused and moved by the feelings of jŏng and han.

Political aspects of emotionalism may be best illustrated by a few examples. In 1960 a student uprising led to the downfall of Syngman Rhee's autocratic regime. This spontaneous mass upheaval against the repressive government involved the loss of many lives and considerable bloodshed. On the day when Rhee moved from the presidential mansion to his private quarters after his resignation, a massive outpouring of public sympathy for the deposed leader occurred, almost bordering on an open adulation of a hero. Crowds of tens of thousands lined up along the streets, many showing their emotions in tears as if they were grieving the loss of a great leader. Even more spectacular were the size of the crowds and the emotions shown by them upon Rhee's death some years later. Millions of citizens grieved openly as if they had lost a great benevolent leader. Was he not ultimately responsible for all the wrongdoing of the repressive Liberal regime? Was it not his repressive rule against which they rose up? How could one explain this sudden shift in public mood? There were many other incidents like this in Korean history. Swayed by the feeling of jŏng, Koreans often lose their rational and critical capacity and are easily swept into emotional outpourings.

Emotional inclinations corrode the critical ability of the governed when they make judgements about the quality of their leadership. They condone the wrongdoings of their leaders so regularly that there is no obvious incentive for the leaders to act responsibly. Had the people acted differently toward the deposed Syngman Rhee, demonstrating their rational capacity to hold a leader responsible for all his repressive policies, the new generation of governmental leaders might have learned

a lesson. In anticipation of the people's critical judgements, the new leaders might have acted more responsibly and responsively. Emotionalism creates a political environment in which the same corrupt and repressive government recurs, unrestrained by any sustained criticism by the governed.

Strong emotional elements in the Korean culture make it difficult for the people to sharply distinguish public and private affairs. Because of the persistent influence of jŏng or personal feelings, public officials often act in a manner contrary to their prescribed public role. Similarly, individual citizens impose on officials the kind of requests that are publicly impermissible, taking advantage of personal relations formed outside the political arena. The feeling of jŏng plays a significant part in such exchanges. What results from all of this mixing of public duty and private feelings is both confusion and ambiguity in the various conducts of public affairs. The boundaries of public responsibility become blurred because of the frequent intrusion of private motives and feelings. One often witnesses inconsistent and vacillating behaviors among public officials. Part of the reason for such behavioral patterns is the lack of a clear conception of their public roles, which is rooted in their excessively emotional entanglements.

Oppositional Syndrome. One notable aspect of the elite political culture is the persistence of what we will call "the oppositional mentality." Edward Shils has suggested this concept in his study of Indian intellectuals.[8] It refers to a tendency among the intellectuals to oppose authorities for opposition's sake. In the Korean society a similar tendency exists, especially among the intellectual leaders, college students, and politicians of opposition parties. Their opposition to the government and its policies

tends to be extreme, allowing no room for conciliation. Because they oppose for opposition's sake, it is difficult to strike a compromise acceptable to both parties of a conflict. In part, the oppositional mentality is a legacy from the colonial past. During the period of Japanese rule the opposition was expressed in the form of nationalistic struggles. It was the moral right of all Koreans to oppose the colonial authorities. There could be no compromise in these struggles until a complete independence was attained. Radical and violent opposition to the Japanese rule was regarded as heroic behavior, and the more extreme the opposition behavior, the more heroic it was. Out of this nature of political opposition developed the tendency for extreme opposition behavior. The opposition mentality formed under colonialism was carried into the post-independence period. Opposition to authorities and power is still considered as something to be admired and sometimes even as a moral imperative among conscientious intellectuals. Several recent studies have shown the persistent effects of the oppositional syndrome among many Korean intellectuals.[9]

Several cultural elements complement and reinforce this oppositional mentality. The chronic factionalism that we have discussed is one such element. Factional loyalty requires its members to oppose all other groups without regard to the merits of positions taken by others. Often, individual loyalty is tested by the degree of the vehemence with which one opposes other groups. Such a requirement of exclusivity inevitably leads to hostility and distrust in inter-group relations. Formalism may also exacerbate the tendency of opposition. Preoccupation with a formal and abstract principle in political debates tends to rigidify conflict between groups. It makes the pragmatic resolution of conflicts difficult because each group stubbornly

freezes its position as a matter of principle. Opposition to the regime among college students, intellectual elites, and some politicians was of this kind.

Opposition mentality hinders the development of a pragmatic bargaining culture, a prerequisite of the democratic process. Moreover, it intensifies political conflicts on all levels by polarizing the contesting groups. Conflicts of this kind often lead to political stalemates and immobilisme, as has so frequently been the case in the National Assembly. On numerous occasions in the past members of the government and opposition parties were embroiled in a toal conflict, bringing the legislative process to a complete standstill. In less extreme forms, oppositional mentality manifests itself in confrontational and occasionally violent styles of politics which determine the patterns of partisan relations in the National Assembly. Oppositional syndrome in its most virulent form causes political instability by intensifying conflicts and immobilisme.

Volatility and Unpredictability. To be conceptually precise, these two characteristics should not be treated as part of the political culture. Neither is the volatility in political behaviors nor are their unpredictable changes the components of the belief system. Instead, they should be regarded as the behavioral consequences of the political culture. It is, nevertheless, important to consider these characteristics because they tell us something about how the political culture helps shape behavior patterns.

Korean political behaviors are often unpredictable. This is so because political relationships tend to be in a constant state of flux, making it difficult to form an organization of any permanence. Whether

one ponders the relationship between a leader and his followers or the relationships among the individuals, the nexus of these personal interrelations displays a highly fluid character.[10] No wonder is it that the durable coalitions of politicians do not frequently occur nor do the stable alignments of political forces. The fluid state of political relationships frustrates all efforts to institutionalize powers, including political parties, the legislature, intermediate social organizations, and other participatory institutions. By definition, institutionalization requires a stable and recurrent pattern of behaviors, a characteristic which the Korean political culture does not seem to promote.

Not only are the Korean political behaviors fluid but also highly volatile in character. Notice the total and almost masochistic submission shown by the Korean people for their repressive regimes. For long periods of time they endured such repressive rules without much protest. A period of tranquility prevailed with a majority of people remaining in their fatalistic silence. However, this tranquility was often interrupted by an abrupt and sudden outburst of mass violence. The onslaught of mass upheavals is difficult to predict in advance, because it follows a period of relative tranquility. The student uprising of 1960 burst out at the moment when the power of Syngman Rhee's regime reached its zenith. So it was with the unexpected uprisings in Pusan and Masan, 1979. The ferocity and distructiveness with which people plunge into violence are indeed astounding, in view of the fact that they remain totally submissive during the period of tranquility. The fluctuation between tranquility and violence has characterized the politics in recent decades. And the swiftness and violence with which

people move from total submission to all-out defiance suggest the volatile nature of Korean political behaviors.

Why are the Korean political behaviors unpredictable and volatile? The Korean political culture provides part of the explanation. Of particular relevance here are several aspects of the political culture that we have discussed earlier: the truncated nature of the belief system, authoritarian attitudes, political emotionalism, oppositional syndrome, and small group collectivism. We will argue that the interaction among these five cultural elements produces both unpredictability and volatility. The truncated belief system meant the lack of a consistent structure in the beliefs and attitudes held by the citizens and elites. For example, while the people express an ardent desire for a democratic form of government on the one hand, they also hold, on the other hand, a set of strong beliefs and values fundamentally destructive of it, namely highly authoritarian attitudes, their disinclination to make pragmatic compromises, and their attraction to personalized powers. It is extremely difficult to predict which part of their compartmentalized belief system will assert itself at any given time and be transformed into concrete political actions. This uncertainty is a factor contributing to the unpredictable behavioral patterns.

Personalism that we have treated as an aspect of authoritarianism, is another factor. It refers to the tendency to build all power relations around individual persons rather than institutions. Personalized power is inherently less durable than institutionalized powers. When a leader who exercised an absolute power collapses, the whole system breaks up, leaving behind a complete power vacuum. The lack of an institutionalized means of

political succession creates a politically volatile situation. The strong undercurrent of emotionalism that we have noted as an aspect of the political culture is also a factor. There is no way of telling when the outbursts of suppressed emotions will occur. However, these feelings do erupt in violent forms after a sustained period of tranquility. The onset of emotional outbursts is abrupt and swift, catching the rulers of a regime totally unprepared. No less significant a factor is the role of oppositional mentality that we have attributed to the Korean intellectual elites. When there exists little potential for mass upheaval, the oppositional mentality would be confined to a small group of disgruntled intellectuals. They can do no more than putting up a few sporadic and small scale obstructionist oppositions, which might irritate the regime leaders a little but does not do any devastating harm. But the alienated intellectuals could play a crucial role as catalysts if there develops a potential for a mass uprising, providing the movement with leadership, organizational skills, and most importantly, an ideological platform around which the people can rally. The persistence of an oppositional mentality sustains the will to resist oppressive regimes. Small group attachment affects the character of social and political relations. It diminishes the basis of broad social and political cooperation. Excessive preoccupation with the interests of one's own immediate group results in an unwillingness to cooperate genuinely with members of other small groups. Consequently, suspicion and distrust characterize many aspects of social relations. All political relationships built upon such a premise are likely to be fluid and unstable.

Although each of these cultural components individually has a role

in shaping unpredictable political behavior, a sudden abrupt escalation of mass violence on a large scale requires something more, however. A massive eruption is likely to occur when each of these cultural tendencies converge in a mutually reinforcing manner. Metaphorically, we may think of five lines of cultural forces running on a space, occasionally intersecting with others. The point at which an abrupt escalation of mass violence occurs is where these lines come together to intersect. What precipitates such a simultaneous convergence of cultural forces and exactly at what point it occurs are the questions which require research in the future.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Origins and Development

The unconditional surrender of Japan to the allied powers in 1945 marked the end of her 36 years of colonial rule over Korea. The Japanese rule in Korea (1910-1945) was a ruthless and despotic one, which left very little room for participation of the Korean people in any significant aspect of politics. It was a harsh colonial rule that the triumphant conquerors imposed on the subjects of a defeated country, even harsher in many respects than the colonial rule of the Western powers in Africa and Asia. Although there were numerous resistence movements against the colonial regime, both within and outside the country, a majority of the Korean people did not have any real opportunity to participate in politics or to acquire the experience of self-governance. By the time the country was liberated from Japan, there existed neither a coherent leadership group emerging from the independence movement nor active citizen

groups who could help create a democratic form of government.

Even more tragic was the development of conflict between the two victorious allied powers, the United States and the Soviet Union, in the Korean Peninsula, which ultimately resulted in the division of the country. In the southern half of the country alone a general election was held in 1948 under the supervision of the United Nations Temporary Commission on Korea (UNTCOK) to establish the first National Assembly. Subsequently, the National Assembly drafted and approved the nation's Constitution, and South Korea soon joined the ranks of independent states, with Syngman Rhee as her first president. The government created under the new Constitution was a republic in its basic form, with a curious mixture of both the British parliamentary system and the American presidential system. Also, the Constitution fully guaranteed the basic individual rights and liberties which could be construed to be an explicit attempt on the part of political leaders to establish a liberal democracy.

Despite the earnest aspirations and hopes of those who helped draft the democratic and modern Constitution, the new government quickly fell prey to Rhee's autocratic rule. Political opposition was ruthlessly suppressed, destroying any chance there was for the development of a viable two- or multi-party system. Overshadowed by the predominance of the Executive, the legislature became increasingly a rubber stamp organization. However, the student uprising of 1960 brought down Rhee's regime and ushered in a new political era in the country. The Democratic Party, an ineffective opposition party under Rhee's autocratic rule, emerged now victorious in a national election and formed a new government. The Democratic Party's rule (1960-61), seriously ridden with factionalism,

proved to be dismally impotent and was quickly overthrown by a junta in a successful coup in May, 1961. Although the period of the Democratic Party's rule was brief and its ineffectiveness caused a certain amount of social and political disorder, there is no question that it was the most liberal and democratic period in the nation's postwar history. Likewise, the legislature became the focal point of politics and exercised a great deal of power as the Constitution prescribed. It was now in the National Assmebly where key policies were debated and decided, not in the executive branch as it had been in the past. There was even some real prospect of establishing a parliamentary democracy for the first time in the nation's history. The successful military coup, however, abruptly put an end to the brief but most liberal period in Korea.

The military junta ruled the country for two and a half years until the junta leaders decided to perpetuate their control by becoming politicians themselves. They discarded their military uniforms and competed in the 1963 national election as the members of a newly created Democratic Republican Party. To no one's surprise, the Democratic Republicans won a majority and went on to form a government. The new regime, although no longer controlled directly by the junta, was still a government by the soldiers in mufti. Under this Democratic Republican regime the Executive has gained such an enormous power and stature that the legislature and the judiciary are both reduced to their subservient roles.

Membership and Formal Powers

During much of the post-World War II period unicameralism has been the general rule. An exception occurred during the brief period of Chang Myŏn's government, 1960-61 when a bicameral legislature was

created. The National Assembly consisted then of a lower House of Representatives and an upper House of Councillors, with the membership of each house elected by different electoral procedures. The bicameral legislature was short-lived, however, due to the military coup d'etat in May, 1961. Ever since, a unicameral legislature has been in continued operation.

Under the yushin rule (the October Revitalizing Reforms) established in 1972, a complicated electoral system was adopted to select legislative members. Two-thirds of the assemblymen were elected directly by voters while the remaining one-third were appointed by the President. Medium sized constituencies were established by the law, each electing two representatives. The appointed yujonghoe (the Political Society of Revitalizing Reforms) members were nominated by the President with the concurrence of the National Conference for Unification, a 2,500 membership body created to represent "the collective will of the people to pursue peaceful unification of the fatherland" but in fact, no more than a constitutional device to give the President absolute power. Because of this provision of appointed membership the President's control over the legislative branch was practically assured in advance. The appointed members served for a term of three years in contrast to a six-year term for the elected members.

The fortunes of the National Assembly have fluctuated over the years. It was given a wide range of formal powers at the beginning but they were gradually taken away by the executive. Since 1948 there have been more than a half dozen constitutional amendments, each time resulting in reorganization of legislative powers. It should be noted that these amendments were not always stimulated by any inadequacy of the constitutional

provisions but by a lesser motive of strengthening the personal power of the executive. Formal powers of the National Assembly were drastically reduced in the yushin Constitution of 1972. The list of powers given to the National Assembly included: deliberation and enactment of legislative bills, approval of national budget, the power of concurrence in the declaration of war and the dispatch of the army to foreign countries, the power to ratify treaties and agreements with foreign countries, and the power to initiate impeachment proceedings against the President, the Prime Minister, the cabinet members, and other key government officials.

In comparison to previous Assemblies, the yushin legislature lacked several crucial powers to check executive dominance. One was the abandonment of a previous provision which empowered the legislature to make investigations of any governmental agencies. Another was the reduced budgetary power: although the legislature could consider the budget submitted by the executive, it could not increase the sum or add a new item. Moreover, if the legislature failed to approve it, the executive could still disburse the budget within a limit. What was more important is the fact that all these formal powers of the legislature could easily be circumvented by the executive. The President could completely freeze the legislature by invoking the national security law, his power for emergency decrees, or martial law.

Internal Organization

Principal officers of the Assembly included the Speaker, two Vice Speakers and the Chairmen of the 13 Standing Committees. In recent years one of the two Vice Speakers was usually selected from among the opposition members as a matter of courtesy, although it was not legally required.

The rest of the key offices were always controlled by the government party. The Committee Chairmen were elected by a majority vote in the Assembly. The Committee system was organized closely in parallel to the government ministries, each committee with its counterpart government agency. Legislative bills proposed by individual members or the executive were first debated in one of these committees. In this respect, the committees could play a potentially decisive role in legislation. However, the executive exercised such a complete control over the phase of committee deliberations that they were anything but an effective arena for debate. In addition, there were also the Special Committees appointed for a limited period and to deal with special matters.

The Assembly was required to hold a regular session once a year for no more than 90 days. Extraordinary sessions could be called by the President or by one-third of all representatives for no more than 30 days. The limitations imposed on the length of legislative sessions represented a significant departure from the previous practices. Prior to the promulgation of the 1972 yushin Constitution the legislature could sit in a regular session for as many as 120 days. The shortening of the session was obviously aimed at weakening the legislature.

The National Assembly has the assistance of a sizeable legislative bureaucracy. The Assembly Secretariat employs well over 1,000 staff and support personnel, all carrying civil service ranks. The Secretary-General, an office equivalent in rank to a cabinet post, supervises all staff functions. One most important part of the staff organization consists of the senior counsellors, a sort of senior staff members who are assigned to the standing committees and work as subject matter specialists. The number

of the senior counsellors is fixed by the law: 35. The National Assembly Library, an organ separate from the Secretariat, also provides services necessary for the routine conduct of legislative affairs. The Library houses one of the largest collections in the nation and provides important legislative reference services. It employs several hundred librarians and well trained researchers.

THE DYNAMICS OF LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

The legislative process may be viewed as the result of the interplay between formal legislative structure and the political culture. The focus on the process leads us to the analysis of what actually occurs inside and outside the legislature rather than how it should formally function. The legislative process involves many different actors: legislative members, parties and factions, the executive, interest groups, and constituents in the district. The interactions among these actors produce the dynamics of legislative process.

Legislative Members

Korean legislators, like their counterparts in other countries, are a highly select group in terms of their background characteristics. They are middle-aged, all in their forties and fifties; they are all well educated with college or advanced degrees in law, political science or military science; they held prestigious professional occupations; and their social origins are primarily of the middle and upper middle classes. In this respect they are not representative of the population in society. In recent years the Assembly has been dominated by three main groups: the ex-military officers, the ex-bureaucrats, and the career politicians.

In the wake of the 1961 military coup, a large number of the ex-generals and high ranking officers entered the legislature. It was both a reflection of the increasing political role of the military as well as the result of a deliberate government strategy of cooptation designed to enlist the support of the military establishment. The percentage of the ex-bureaucrats has increased over the years, markedly more so since the yushin reforms. They represent most pro-government elements in the legislature whose personal loyalties were tested during their previous service in the key administrative posts or in the Blue House. The career politicians are found primarily among the opposition members. Most of them started their political careers well before the military rose to power and served as the members of the opposition even under Syngman Rhee's regime. Because they entered politics early in their lives, they had no other occupational experience.

With but a few exceptions, there are generally no significant differences between government and opposition members. Opposition members tend to be slightly older than the government members. They also have a longer political experience than do most of the government members. Except for these minor differences they form collectively a homogeneous group in their social characteristics.

The results of survey studies show that most legislators acquired their interest in politics quite early in their lives. They grew up in families in which politics had been a regular subject of discussions; they had several of their immediate family members actively involved in politics who provided a role model during their formative years; they were themselves very active in extra-curricular activities, often serving as the officers of student body organizations; and they discussed politics

frequently with their friends and schoolmates. The origins of their subsequent career development could therefore be traced back to their early and politicized formative years.

When they decided initially to seek a seat in the legislature, what were their principal motivations? The question of motivations, especially those among politicians, is a difficult subject to analyze. As a rough measure we may distinguish those drawn to politics primarily because of the tangible and intangible benefits it confers and those who get involved out of a strong sense of civic duty or a desire to serve the public interest. A predominant majority of Korean legislators decided to seek the office because of the "extrinsic" rewards such as prestige, power, and income. Only a small minority of no more than 10-20 percent chose a legislative career to fulfill their altruistic motives. A legislative career carries with it a highly instrumental value, productive of personal influence, status, income, and prestige. The high extrinsic rewards associated with the legislature are really part of a larger phenomenon that we shall call the "primacy of politics," a marked structural feature of Korean society. Politics and government occupy such a central role in Korean social life that they directly intervene in the allocation of all social values such as prestige, status, and wealth. To put it differently, values and resources are structurally <u>cumulative</u> and the epicenter of this agglutinated structure is the government. Thus, successes in politics and government are the best avenues to fame and fortune in Korea. For this reason, the most ambitious young people seek public careers, not so much because of their motivation to serve the nation but because of an excellent prospect for rapid social advancement. The primacy of politics has many negative

implications, including its effect on the "high risk system," the subject which we have treated extensively elsewhere.[11]

Political parties and organized social groups play a relatively insignificant role in the recruitment process. For most legislators their initial decisions to seek the office were entirely their own and their parties or groups with which they were associated, played no important role. One study showed that well over 53 percent were "self-starters." Where political parties and interest groups are strong, one would expect to find a smaller proportion of the self-starters because successful political careers depend on the active sponsorship of organizations. However, it appears that parties and organized social groups have not yet matured enough in Korea to play such a role in political recruitment.

It is also important to note the phenomenon of yŏchon yado or the persistent tendency of the countryside supporting the government party and the cities supporting the opposition. A predominant majority of the government members were elected from rural districts while most of the legislators in opposition represented large urban districts like Seoul, Pusan, Taegu, and other cities. This distinctive pattern of electoral support had gradually emerged under Rhee's autocratic rule and remained in the ensuing years. The data from the 7th National Assembly indicate, for example, that 72 percent of the opposition New Democrats, in comparison to only 14 percent of the pro-government Democratic Republicans, represented urban districts in large cities. There are good reasons for such an electoral cleavage. Small group collectivism that still persists strongly in rural districts makes it easy for the government to mobilize rural votes. In large urban centers where voters have a high level of political

consciousness and therefore are disillusioned by the repressive government policies, it is the opposition candidates who often benefit from protest voting. Many urban voters tended to support the opposition members as an expression of their displeasure with the government in power. The yŏnchon yado phenomenon remains a distinctive aspect of legislative recruitment.

The cases of voluntary retirement from legislative service are extremely rare. Once elected or appointed to a legislative position, everyone tries to hold on to it with a ferocious tenacity. The competition for a renomination or reappointment has been intense indeed, providing both colorful and even sycophantic antics which enlivened the otherwise dull legislative life. Unless forced out by electoral defeats or by failure to obtain an appointment from the President, all tried to retain their seats at all costs.

Parties and Factions

A multi-party system has been in operation ever since 1948. In the first few years after independence, a multitude of parties, often poorly organized and most nothing more than a small group of personal entourage, appeared in the Korean political landscape. According to one estimation, there were some 350 such organizations. Gradually, all these incipient parties disappeared or were absorbed into larger and better organized parties. With the establishment of the Rhee regime party politics evolved slowly into two more or less cohesive groups, one in support of President Rhee's leadership and the other opposed to it. This marked the beginning of a loose two-party system and set the pattern for party politics in the years to come. We spoke of a loose two-party system because there have always been more than two major parties in the legislature. Minor opposition parties and

a small number of independents have added an element of fluidity to the basic structure of a two-party system.

In a more accurate sense the Korean party system should be characterized, to use Scalapino's term, as the one-and-one-half party system. No opposition parties have ever attained power through elections so far. In more than a dozen elections held since 1948, the government party has not yet lost a single electoral contest. The perennial dominance of the government party and the lack of any realistic opportunity for opposition parties to capture power are the characteristics which define the Korean party system.

In the recent yushin legislature the dominance of the government was even greater than in some previous assemblies. With the appointed members, one-third of the total membership, on the government side, it was relatively easy for the Democratic Republican Party to secure another one-third of the total seats in election. The government was comfortably in control of a two-thirds majority in the National Assembly, thanks to its control over the appointed membership.

Factionalism is another well-known feature of political parties. It is much more virulent in opposition parties, often fractionalizing them to the point of total ineffectiveness. Factional alignments within the opposition New Democratic Party are something of a legend. These factions are organized, in keeping with the general political culture, on the bases of personal connections forged through family, school, and regional ties. Factional strife and rivalry tend to be intense and sometimes openly unsavory, which ultimately weakens the role of opposition parties in the legislature.

At least on the surface, the government parties appeared to be free from the divisive factionalism. In part, this was because the continued tenure of each government member depended almost entirely upon the demonstration of his or her loyalty to the President. Given the kind of personalism which prevails in the organization of power, it is no surprise that deviant factions were not permitted in the government parties. Any member who showed the slightest sign of disagreement with the executive was promptly and severely disciplined or removed from his position. This does not, however, mean that there was no factional competition. In the government parties, factionalism appeared in a different guise. Because the executive, who was also the leader of the government parties, controlled a full array of rewards and punishments, there was a great deal of rivalry among government members competing for his favors and recognition. Not only did this personalistic power structure keep the government members in line, but also caused them to form a sort of mutual aid society to draw the attention and favors of the President. Thus, factional strife was muted on the surface, but beneath it were intense factional rivalries for the attention of the President.

Lawmaking: The Executive Dominance

Nowhere was the executive dominance more evident than in the lawmaking process. A predominant majority of the legislative bills were drafted and proposed for consideration by the executive, although legislative members also had the right to do so. The number of bills submitted by the executive is only a weak measure of the executive dominance, however. A stronger measure is the rate of success for government bills in passing the legisture. There is evidence to show that the government bills fared markedly

better than did the private members' bills in the last 30 years. In one recent session the executive sent nearly four hundred bills to the Assembly and none of them was defeated.

Government bills were only perfunctorily debated, and amendments or changes were seldom attached to them by the National Assembly. On numerous occasions it passed important bills such as the annual national budget without a single debate on the floor or only after a superficial five or six minutes of debate. The autonomy of the legislative branch could be indicated by the extent to which it can reject, modify, or amend the government bills. Measured against this standard, the National Assembly was an impotent body, serving merely as a rubber-stamp organization in lawmaking.

The absence of significant debate on the floor could presumably be compensated for by the debates in various committees. But that has not been the case in the past. The committees, designed to serve as the main lawmaking arenas since the 1963 reorganization of the Assembly, were in fact completely dominated by government members including all their chairmanships. In consequence, the entire phase of committee deliberation of a bill was subject to executive manipulation.

Because of its subservient role to the executive, the legislature often became an object of public ridicule. One of the more humorous of these is the phrase "Kukhoe sinyŏhwa" meaning that the power of the Assembly has steadily declined so that it has become a maidservant of the executive. This popular ridicule contains only part of the truth. To say that the power of the legislature has steadily declined, one must assume that there was a time when it was really powerful. Except for the first and the short-

lived 5th Assemblies, it has always been a weak body. From the beginning the National Assembly had been dominated by the executive. If this were the case, how could one conclude that the legislature lost its stature over time? The fact of the matter is that it began as a weak body and remained so through much of its history.

The Informal Rules of the Game

This is one subject which has been least studied. As a result, our knowledge about this aspect of the legislative process is very limited. We can offer here only a few impressionistic observations. The National Assembly, like any other political institution, is culturally a microcosm of the Korean society and therefore, must reflect all the traits of the Korean political culture. The influence of formalism, especially its aspect of myŏngbun, seems to be a factor shaping part of the informal rules. Because of their excessive obsession with myŏngbun they tend to be very loud in speech but small in action. This produces a rule that a legislative member should find a good myŏngbun before he should take an action. A corollary is that the person with a better myŏngbun overrides others with lesser ones. There occurs, therefore, a constant juggling of positions in search of a better myŏngbun in order to upstage the opponents.

No clear-cut norms of partisan competition have yet emerged in the Assembly. Partisan conflicts have often gotten out of hand, resulting in violent and unruly physical confrontations in the Assembly Hall. Fist fighting, shouting, and forced disruption of an orderly meeting have been frequent, especially when tempers and emotions ran high on both sides of the bench. The norms of of reciprocity and courtesy have not been firmly established. Nor has the norm of subject matter specialization been developed to such an extent that members defer to their specialist-colleagues for cues and advice. Every legislator acts as if he or she is an expert on all matters.

Among the government members of the DRP and the yujonghoe the rule of inviolability of party line was operative. In this instance, the party line was tantamount to the will of the executive. Sanctions against any infringement of this rule were prompt and severe. The rule says: "No matter how you personally feel about the directive coming down from the party President, never, never challenge it." In marked contrast, this rule does not apply among opposition members. The opposition New Democratic Party is neither well organized nor led by an absolute leader. Factional bickering and seemingly perennial struggle over the party leadership make it difficult to maintain a strong discipline.

The rules of seniority and apprenticeship, the two most well-known norms of the U. S. Congress, are prominently absent in the National Assembly. In the selection of the committee chairmen a member's length of service in the legislature was totally irrelevant. The relevant factor was how much personal trust he could elicit from the executive head or his close advisors. Likewise, the apprenticeship rule that requires new members to restrain their participation in debates, to be respectful of their senior colleagues, and to perform generally less attractive chores, is also absent. There exists a strong pressure for new members to establish their positions as quickly as possible and one speedy way of doing this is to be outspoken. If done cleverly, it was also one sure way to get quick attention from the supreme power holder. Among the new members many were politicians of the greatest prominence, having previously served as Prime Minister, cabinet members, or as director of a powerful intelligence agency. These prominent politicians, although new to the legislature, moved right into the key legislative positions.

The National Assembly has a relatively short and turbulent history. Its operation has been interrupted several times by unexpected regime changes. Consequently, the Assembly has not yet been firmly institutionalized. Nor has this institution had a long enough time and stability to crystallize its informal rules of the game.

Politics of Representation

Representation, along with lawmaking, is one of the two most central functions that we attribute to legislative members. Whom do Korean legislators try to represent? How do they try to represent their constituencies? And, what kind of things do they do on behalf of their constituents, and how much? We seek to answer these questions in order to provide a general account of the nature of political representation.

A clear majority of legislative members believe that their principal duty is to represent the collective interests of the nation as a whole. Although they were elected from geographic constituencies, only a few perceived their role as one of spokesman for the specific interests of their districts. The views and opinions held by their district constituents were not regarded as crucial to their representative duties. They rated their own parties as their principal focus of representation. The same study also indicates that over one-fourth did not have any clear notion about "whom" they should be representing. This evidence suggests that Korean legislators do not have in their minds specific groups of people to whom they target their actions. All that they are aware of, is a vague entity like the welfare of the whole nation. In order to transform the Assembly into a representative insitution more sensitive to the will of the people at the grassroots, legislative members should acquire a conception of more specific

and concrete focus of representation, such as their voters in the district, organized social groups, and so forth.

Peculiar to the yushin legislature was the existence of appointed members. One-third of the total membership was appointed by the executive, allegedly to ensure the representation of the entire national cummunity. As one might easily expect, these appointed members did not feel obliged to represent the interests of any part of society. In reality, they acted as a direct agent of the executive. Together with these appointed members who totally ignored the representation of any specific segments of society and the elected members who were also insensitive to such specific interests, the yushin Assembly was anything but a strongly representative body.

The manner in which legislative members try to represent their groups is another important aspect of representation. Wahlke and Eulau have called it the question of representational styles.[12] They suggested three categories of such styles: delegate, trustee, and politico. The delegate style refers to the cases in which legislative members conceive of their own job as the "errand boys," that is, they try to reflect the views and opinions of their constituencies as faithfully as possible, without permitting their own personal views or convictions to interfere. The trustee style refers to the very opposite inclinations: in this instance, a legislative member tries to pursue his own political beliefs and convictions, ignoring the sentiments of the groups whom he is supposed to represent. The politico style represents a hybrid type: a legislator vacillates between the two styles of delegate and trustee depending on the circumstances. By far, the delegate style was a dominant mode of representation among Korean legislators. One study revealed that three-quarters of the 7th Assemblymen defined their

job as the delegates. The remainder chose the trustee style, with no one selecting the politico role. In view of the Korean political culture, it is not surprising to find a complete absence of the politico style. An aspect of formalism requires people to stress abstract and general principles. People are expected to live by principles, which is insisted upon even more strongly among political leaders. The vacillating attitudes of a politico violate the behavioral codes of formalism. This does not mean that Korean legislators do not vacillate in their day-to-day dealings. They do. What we are trying to suggest here is that on the formal level, they do not consider it appropriate nor desirable to act in the style of a politico.

If we look at the style and focus of representation simultaneously as indicated by Korean legislative members, we see an astonishing inconsistency in their conceptions. On the one hand, they saw their role as one of representing their constituents' opinions as faithfully as possible. Most chose the delegate style of representation. On the other hand, they exhibited no clear notion of "whom" they should be representing. Many mentioned vaguely that they should work for the interests of the whole nation. Being a large collectivity composed of extremely diverse elements and interests, a nation is not quite the same entity or as concrete as a labor union or as a village community in the district. This inconsistency in perception implies a low level of institutionalization of representative system. As an abstract principle, almost all Korean legislators accept the premise of popular representation. However, in their official actions they do not show such commitments. When they are not quite sure themselves of which groups they should represent, how can they act in a responsive and representative manner? Their professed commitment to the democratic principle

of popular representation still remains more of an ideal than a reality.

In pursuance of their representative duty, legislative members are also expected to perform constituency services. Broadly speaking, constituency service encompasses a wide range of assistance that a legislator provides for individuals or groups in his district. He may bring "pork barrel" projects to his home district, may help get government funds to construct roads, school buildings, or other public facilities. On a more personal level, he may find a job for his constiuent, intercede with a government agency when his constituent has problems with it, or give an inspiring speech at a school commencement. How important do they regard such activities, and how frequently do they engage in these activities? Many legislative members, well over one-half of all interviewed in a recent study, regarded such activities as not essential to their job. Instead, they considered other activities far more important, such as their participation in legislative debates. It is interesting to note that the constituents also did not stress the importance of constituency services. Although it does not appear that legislators render a great deal of services, they do seem to take seriously the requests coming from local notables (yuji) in their districts. Because these local notables control electoral votes in their respective communities, the legislators try hard to cultivate their good will and friendship. There is a marked difference between urban and rural legislators. Those who represented large urban districts showed a strong disinclination to engage in constituency services. By comparison, the rural legislators were far more eager to render such services. This suggests that constituency service is a significant aspect of a legislator's job if he were elected from a rural district. There is also evidence to assert that the more rural one's

district, the more salient is his service work. The available evidence fails to show any significant difference between the government and opposition members both in the type and amount of services rendered.

The National Assembly in the Political System

The legislature is the most important linkage institution. A strong and effective legislature is crucial to the operation of a democratic polity. Such a legislature helps expand participatory opportunity, permitting broader segments of society to have their voices heard in governmental decisions. It can also help legitimate the government's policies and authorities, contributing to the system's stability.

The National Assembly played a modest role in the expansion of citizen participation. Had there been no legislature, the Korean People would have that much less participation normally associated with a representative body. To begin with, the existence of a legislature, even if it was a very weak institution, created an electoral opportunity every four or six years. Although electoral participation may not amount to much when one considers its mobilized character, it is, however, just about the only opportunity of participation available to the people. More importantly, legislative members help stimulate other forms of participation. To many constituents, legislators appear more friendly and approachable than those aloof and condescending government officials. When constituents have a problem they would feel easy to take it to their representative and seek his assistance in their effort to influence government action. There are other forms of participation stimulated merely because an elected representative is around. All these forms of participation would not have been possible if the legislature had not existed. Until now, the proportion of citizens actually lobbying their

representatives has been extremely small: no more than 4-5 percent of the adult population. However, as the legislature gains its strength in the future it will provide opportunities for more active participation by the citizens.

The resilience of a legislative institution is a well documented subject. Even in most dictatorial regimes there exists a legislature. In many Third World countries legislatures were frequently disbanded during crises, but these bodies were also promptly resurrected after the crises subsided. The question is then: why do these dictatorial regimes not do away totally with this cumbersome institution? The answer is that the legislature helps enhance the regime's legitimacy. The survival of the Korean National Assembly through several not-so-democratic regimes is also a testimony to the above observation.

Although the National Assembly has not been a strong and effective body, it has attracted a fair amount of public attention. Of course, it is by no means as prominent as the executive in the people's cognitive map. But it does command some attention and visibility among the public. Our study shows that some 40 percent of the adult citizens had a reasonably accurate knowledge of the legislative membership. And, 60 percent were able to name at least one of their legislators.[13] The public awareness of the legislative institution, if not remarkably impressive, is still considerable. The Korean people know what the legislature is, what it is supposed to do, and how well or poorly it is doing its job. This public awareness was another factor which had prevented the leaders of the past regimes from abolishing it.

Despite the fact that the National Assembly has not performed

satisfactorily, the Korean public still regard it as an important and worthwhile institution which deserves maintaining. There appears to be considerable public support for the legislative institution. This support is not based so much on the accomplishments or performance of the National Assembly. Rather, it stems from their hope and aspiration for a democratic future in which the Assembly would perform its presumed role. Many citizens recognize the important role of the legislature in the democratic process. Also, they realize that an active and strong legislative body is crucial to the establishment of a democratic polity. For this reason, they accord the Assembly their support.

All institutions require a minimal level of public support for their continued existence. Viewed from this perspective, the Korean National Assembly has met at least one vital condition for its survival, namely a degree of public support. To be a bit more precise, how much public support is there for this institution? Our study shows that over one-half of the adult citizens expressed their unreserved support for it, suggesting that the National Assembly is worth keeping. Others thought it utterly useless, given what little it did, or were unable to sharply distinguish the legislature from other parts of the government. The National Assembly will, it seems clear, expand its base of public support as it matures into a stronger and more effective body.

We have stressed the intimate connection between the legislative institution and the functioning of a democracy. If one assumes that a genuine democracy is what both the leaders and the people in Korea want, one of the first steps to take to fulfill their aspiration is to create a strong and active legislature. The nation's political life should be

organized around the legislature because there is no other linkage institution more vital than the representative body. It is important to strengthen the Assembly by constitutional and other structural reforms. But the task of building a democratic and strong legislature goes much deeper than mere legal and institutional tinkering. The legislature is deeply embedded in the nation's political culture. Thus, its operation is invariably affected by the political cultural tendencies. Without support of a cultural infrastructure, i.e., the participant political culture, the National Assembly is not likely to mature into a stronger body. The Korean political culture still contains many elements inimical to the successful operation of a democratic process. Small group consciousness, formalism, authoritarian attitudes, personalism, oppositional syndrome, and political emotionalism are all the kind of cultural elements distinctly hostile to the creation of a democratic process. These cultural tendencies need to be changed through citizen education and by farsighted policies designed to foster values and beliefs appropriate for a democratic citizen. It is a task even more difficult than achieving economic growth. It also requires a political leadership with foresight and commitment to the ideals of democracy. The road to democracy is tortuous, indeed. In the last decade Koreans have succeeded in transforming their country of poverty into one of relative affluence. Now, they face another undertaking, a challenge even greater than their economic achievements.

FOOTNOTES

1. Hannah Pitkin, The Concept of Representation (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), p. 235.

2. For analyses of the fluctuations in legislative power over the years, see C. L. Kim and Byong-kyu Woo, "Legislative Leadership and Democratic Development," in Dae-sook Suh and Chae-Jin Lee, eds., Political Leadership in Korea (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1976), pp. 41-52; Jŏng-il Han, Hankuk ipbŏpkyŏljŏng e kwanhan yŏngu [A Study of the Korean Legislative Decision-Making Process], a Ph.D. dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty, Kŏn-Kuk University (Seoul, Korea: 1972); and Byong-kyu Woo, Ipbŏp gwajŏngron [A Study of the Legislative Process], (Seoul, Korea: Ilchokak, 1970), pp. 28-44, 369-388.

3. Tong-a Ilbo, January 1, 1980, p. 15.

4. For a full explication of the concept of amoral familism, see Edward C. Banfield, Moral Basis of a Backward Society (New York: Free Press, 1958), pp. 83-101.

5. Smauel P. Huntington and Joan M. Nelson, No Easy Choice: Political Participation in Developing Countries (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), pp. 7-10.

6. Chong Lim Kim, (ed.), Political Participation in Korea: Democracy, Mobilization, and Stability (Santa Barbara, Cal.: ABC-Clio Press, 1980), esp. see Chapter 6.

7. The concepts of jŏng (情) and han (恨) are central to the emotional life among Koreans. Given the subtle complexity and richness of these two emotional elements we cannot do justice to these concepts by attempting a brief exposition here. We believe that it is a kind of project most appropriate for anthropologists and literary critics to undertake. For our limited purpose, suffice it to say that these two emotional elements play a large role in shaping the perceptions and feelings among Koreans, including their perceptions of the political world.

8. Edward Shils, "Influence and Withdrawal: the Intellectuals in Indian Political Development," in Dwaine Marvick, (ed.), Political Decision-Makers (Glencoe: Free Press, 1961), pp. 48-53.

9. C. L. Kim and Jin Hwan Oh, "Perceptions of Professional Efficacy Among Journalists in a Developing Country," Journalism Quarterly, vol. 51 (Spring, 1974), pp. 73-78; and Sung Chick Hong, The Intellectuals and Modernization (Seoul, Korea: Social Research Institute, Korea University, 1967), pp. 19-25.

10. For a comparison of the nature of leader-follower relationships in Korea and Japan, see C.L. Kim and Young Whan Kihl, "Comparative Notes on the Nature of Political Leadership in Korea and Japan: A Proposal for a Theory," Report No. 49 (Iowa City: The Laboratory for Political Research, The University of Iowa, 1976).

11. See Chong Lim Kim, "Political Atittudes of Defeated Candidates in an American State Election," American Political Science Review, vol. 64 (September, 1970), pp. 879-887; and also, his "Toward a Theory of Individual and Systemic Effects of Political Status Loss," The Journal of Developing Areas, Vol. 5 (January, 1971), pp. 193-206.

12. John C. Wahlke, Heinz Eulau, William Buchanan, and Leroy C. Ferguson, The Legislative System (New York: John Wiley, 1962), pp. 267-310.

13. C.L. Kim and Gerhard Loewenberg, "The Cultural Roots of a New Legislature: Public Perceptions of the Korean National Assembly," Legislative Studies Quarterly, vol. 1 (August, 1976), pp. 371-388.

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